

COIL

Coil are made up of ex-Psychic TV members John Balance and Peter Christopherson, who left last year when they "realised the ideals were being misapplied by other members, and mostly misinterpreted by 'followers' ". But what were the ideals of Psychic TV? Intensity, depth, a spirit of enquiry and play trapped in a maze of arcane referentiality?

The only release as yet is a 12" 'How To Destroy Angels' which is a strange non-rhythmic piece of ritual music. What I've heard of the LP 'Scatology' is quite the reverse: frantic rapidity of the new variety, produced by Jim Thirlwell (Foetus).

Present at interview: John Balance (J); Steve (S) of Possession.

||VG: How long have Coil been together?

J: I started doing cassettes when I was in Psychic TV, doing things they weren't — dreams and delirium, illness. I did a track when I was ill with flu — little hallucinations when in a fever — I worked out some lyrics when I was 'twixt world and nowhere else. Then when Me and Sleazy left PTV we decided to make more of it.

||VG: Have you ambitions with the more ritualistic music?

J: The first PTV themes album was intended as ritualistic, but ended up as a video accompaniment. 'Destroy Angels' was made as a purely ritualistic piece, if people liked the sounds that was all right, but the first consideration was the mathematical and magical structure. This dictated instruments like gongs and bullroarers, a thing that's whirled around the head to make a huge whirring sound. Its used in New Guinea and South America in initiation rites, totally different areas of the world use it for the same reason.

||VG: There is a tradition of this sort of thing in performance art but not 'rock'.

J: I know that Zev bases his performances on using certain metals, say tin on Friday, tying it in with the planets and chooses rhythms accordingly.

||VG: What is the logo on the sleeve, 'Black Sun Rising'?

J: We have a track called 'Solar Lodge', which in America is an offshoot of the Oriental Order of Templars (OTO) who now publish Crowley. They use Chinese and Indian yoga . . .

||VG: So its more secular?

J: But it is metaphysical, black magic as the Sun would have it. Solar lodge is a heavy version of it, blood sacrifices, Californian blood and satan cults. Manson was supposed to have something to do with it. I did a song about it. 'Black Sun' is a symbol for Coil, a surrealists symbol, out of book of Maldoror, the negative of a photo . . . Positive/negativism, like Jim Thirlwell's theory that two negatives make a positive because of purging, its a bit of that, and deliberate word play, ambiguity . . . also Manson, off 'White Album' the song 'Blackbird', Blacks rising and killing all the Whites in a race war, he'd hide in a hole in the desert in Death Valley. There are references to that in the lyrics "A hole in the ground, like a knife in the sand, Solar Lodge" my imagination running riot with all these things.

||VG: Also on the sleeve, "The price of existence is eternal warfare" . . .

J: Its from Crowley. It fits in why my personal philosophy — anything valuable has to come through struggle, against laziness and apathy, want to live on the edge.

S: Neitsche said live dangerously . . .

J: Sounds like James Dean (laughs). Don't need to quote Neitzche to have that attitude. Coil embrace chaos. That's partly what 'Panic' (LP track) is about — "Only thing to fear is fear itself, everything will be all right if you come out of the night" — its beyond saying 'don't be scared of things', its saying create a situation where fear is generated and use the vortex of negative energy to catapult yourself somewhere . . . interesting. It fits in with what Coil is about, delerium not nightmare like H.P. Lovecraft. I have weird dreams (laughs).

Ubu Noir on the LP is based on the Ubu cycle by Jarry — absurdist, vicious — he used to induce hallucinations with ether, and drink himself to death . . . 'cause he liked the feeling . . . but like the way Blixa Bargeld works (laughs). Get inspired when near to death. Like Jim Thirlwell — unbelievable.

||VG: Do you work in that way?

J: We stretch ourselves . . . the tortured artist syndrome (laughs). The studio is such a dead atmosphere need to forget where you are to get into what you are doing.

S: Obviously this is different for different people its a lot of bull really — the tortured artist syndrome makes someone interesting when they're not (laughs).

||VG: That's changing now as producers are becoming more important — a calm placid person that twiddles knobs.

J: We had Jim Thirlwell — most frantic person I've ever met — a bottle of vodka a day — at least!

S: With no visible impairment at all.

J: We chose him because of his manic reputation. He worked us up in the studio — coming in and kicking me to do the vocals — what I needed. I never had to do them in PTV so first time nerves and learning to communicate, like learning to talk, or ride a bicycle . . . a challenge.

||VG: Will Coil work with film?

J: Definately. We've done the soundtrack for a Dereck Jarman film 'The Angelic Conversation' which will be premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in February 85. Its full length — its not surreal, like a ritual seduction that lasts 70 minutes.

S: A "cinema of small gestures".

J: We are going to Mexico soon and will do some filming and sound recording there for a music LP coming out called 'The Sound of Music' on LAYLAH, mostly instrumental.

COIL RELEASES

As Zoskia — Live at Berlin Arorial festival 1983, (Nekrophile-Austrian cassette)

How To Destroy Angels (LAYLAH 12")

Scatology (LP through Some Bizarre)

Restless Day (track on Animal Liberation, Front LP on Memore)

The Wheel (track on Some Bizarre compilation LP and video for US TV show)

The Sound of Music (LAYLAH mini LP)

Tape Loop Music (LAYLAH 12" with Current 93)